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ABSTRACT

The situation today in the area of comprehensive child care is discussed from the viewpoint of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America. A new strategy and new tactics for the accomplishment of a comprehensive child care system in the next four years is outlined. The role of the council is seen to be that of awakening, uniting, and mobilizing the American people to have a direct interest in a system of comprehensive child development. (LB)

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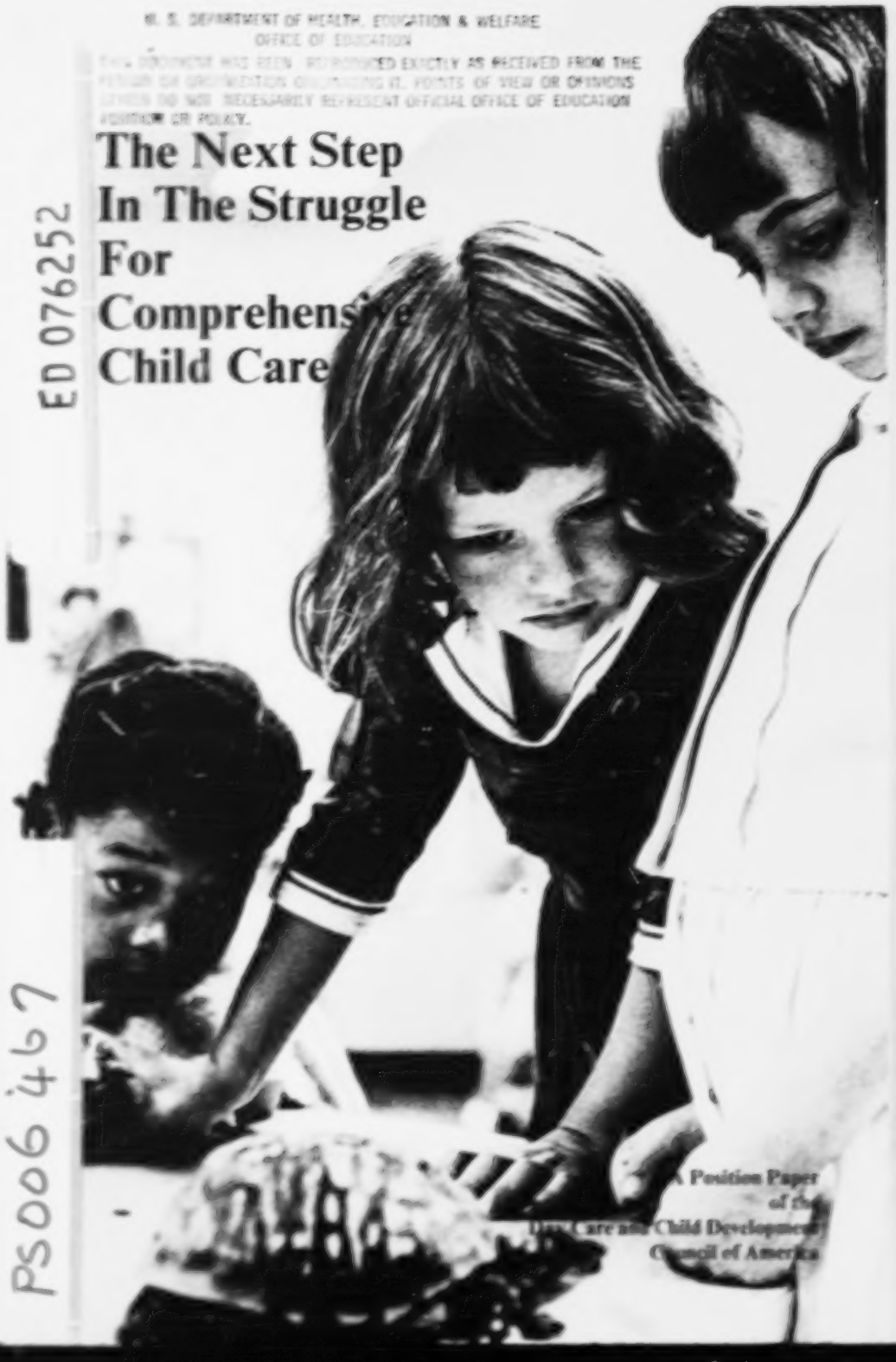

A Position Paper
of the
Day Care and Child Development
Council of America

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The Next Step In the Struggle for Comprehensive Child Care

THEODORE TAYLOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The most knowledgeable people in the child care field know that the loosely formed Washington child care coalition was responsible for the writing and the lobbying through of the comprehensive child care bill. It is also common knowledge that that bill would have been a reality by now if it had had the support of the parents, providers and major national organizations that represent the majority of the grassroots people in this nation.

The immediate assessment of the veto by the day care leadership and its allies indicated that mail was running 20 to 1 against passage of the bill. It was viewed by some as a women's lib gimmick, by others as another categorial giveaway to the welfare hustlers. The vast majority of blue and white collar workers—to many of whom the bill would have provided a direct service—have never and still do not understand to this day the significance of day care and child development.

In rapid succession following the veto, we were hit with the Talmadge Amendment, revenue sharing, the Title IV-A ceiling, and a host of administrative decisions that curtail social service spending in most states as high as 40%. The McGovern defeat was anticlimactic in what was already a fait accompli.

There are those who argue that there exists a well organized group of opposition to the passage of a comprehensive child care bill. We disagree. There is only the lack of a well organized group *for* it.

It might suffice to take a look at what our strengths in child care really are. One, there are the national organizations who were active in the child care coalition that did such an excellent job in the movement of the bill, who if they cared to share what their major weakness was would admit to their inability to organize at the grassroots level.

Second, there were the fringe area organizations who had a limited interest in child care and child development but whose major interest lay elsewhere.

There are the Head Start constituencies: parents, teachers, and regional offices, who have been for the most part since their inception an isolated group plagued by federal, regional, and local bureaucracies which prohibited to a great extent their direct political involvement with the Bill.

The Title IV-A programs were plagued by the state bureaucracies and had no open force that could organize a broader constituency to support the Bill.

There were the trade union movements which at the federal level were doing an excellent job at providing lobbying muscle, but at the local level many of their members were in opposition to the Bill on the basis of its welfare emphases.

When we assess this set of facts, it is amazing that the coalition did as well as it did in getting the Bill through.

Now thirteen months later:

What's Happening

Head Start is weaker today than it was thirteen months ago and being threatened with extinction. OEO by June 1973 will probably vanish into a megaplanned HEW. Title IV-A programs, as you recall, have been reduced in many cases by 30% for the at-large community, and at the moment confusion and apathy hold unrestricted sway. The mayors are attempting to digest a dry dose of revenue sharing. (Some community tactics have been to demand that general revenue sharing be allocated for child care.) The Washington coalition has regrouped itself and is getting prepared to reintroduce the comprehensive child care bill.

But a new dimension has been introduced that has gathered no moss and has a number of the comprehensive child care field forces alarmed. Some scuttlebutt has developed around the introduction of a revenue sharing bill for children which has the appearance of squaring some of the child care forces off against each other.

The bill has a number of appealing features: it would be kept simple, avoiding battles over detail; local council groups would include strong consumer input and would relate to Human Resources Boards set up in response to the Allied Services Act. The bill's support of that Act, which will probably pass, could be a bridge over the troubled waters which divide child care forces.

However, based on several direct and extensive interviews with staff members of the Senate and House, we can say now that chances for passage of such a measure are nil. Congressional reaction is that such a bill, which would simply distribute monies to dubiously committed state governments with no guidelines insuring quality or responsibility, would be disastrous.

Further on the Congressional scene, scattered attempts at introducing some sort of comprehensive child care bill are in the works, but hopes for approval by the House—and the President—are worse than slim. Why? Because grassroots constituencies supporting child care do not appear to exist and their voices are not heard. Some Congressmen admit that they "personally" support such a measure, but the people back home will not back them up. Those who worked hard for the vetoed bill have been badly burned and the flood of mail applauding the veto has not helped to heal their wounds. The mood of a power-threatened Congress, without an alert popular voice to give it support, is, "How can we hold on to what we've got"—not "Let's go get some more."

The Council's Position

Our reading following the veto of the Bill was no great piece of masterminding: that the mood of this administration would become much more repressive and antisocial in character. We drew the conclusion that *organizing* and *raising* the level of understanding of the American people to the need and importance of child care and child development was the only route to win a comprehensive child care bill. See the Council 4 year plan in December 1972 issue of **VOICE FOR CHILDREN**. But we would like to address our attention at the moment to some new factors and the ramifications of those factors.

It is becoming increasingly clear at this office that the administration will dismantle or redirect all of the funds that run the track of the great society approach (which bypassed the state and municipal bureaucracies and set up *federal* structures) and redirect their funds and energies to the extent possible back down the pike of state, municipal, and old line institutions.

To discuss whether one likes this or not is to fall short of the ramifications of this action. You will remember the pressures of the civil rights movement all the way up to and after the riots, the pressures on the mayors and governors for services that they had neither the resources or technical know-how to deliver. This administration's purpose is to place the weight of that responsibility back on their backs. Not only in rhetoric but in action President Nixon has told the American people that he intends to give them the money to solve their problems through revenue sharing.

Whether or not this is true and whether or not he will is beside the point: he has sold a revenue sharing concept while at the same time dismantling any avenues for local people to reach for federal relief, a factor that is the most significant in the planning of new strategies. The mayors or governors do not have to be told they do not have the money—they already know it.

The community people must be won to redirect their attention to local mayors and their governing bodies—to city councils, governors and state legislators. They in turn will be forced to demand federal relief. It is not a question of benevolence or of the mayors and governors doing the people a favor. This tactic will result in a much more common approach based on the *extent* of local community and grassroots organizing tactics.

None of us can afford to be gulled into the trap of gazing passively at Capitol Hill and asking each other anxiously, "What are they doing up there?" To regard this as a strategy is a deadly mistake, because what is on the Hill right now is simply there, and it is all going to stay right there as *faits accomplis* and nothing else as long as we accept it as such. It is never going to change until the American man and woman, in their masses, are brought to understand the issues that vitally affect their lives and move in a massive groundswell to change the actions and reactions in Washington. There is a great dependence in the country these days on "what is happening in Washington." *The fact is that what happens in Washington depends on what the people do.* The people are in ever greater danger of forgetting that—which would please a lot of people hereabouts—so it is up to us to see that they remember.

The Role of the Council

It goes without saying that we support the passage of a comprehensive child care bill. But we are convinced that this will never happen in the 94th Congress, or be approved by this administration, without a grassroots public education and community organizing campaign from one end of this country to the other.

The government in Washington will only move on the day it is convinced that *not* to move will be political suicide. Today it is completely safe for Washington to do nothing—because the groundswell of citizens pressing at every level of society for the needs of their children and their families is absent.

Our role is clear to us. We must take the resources and energies at our command and create that groundswell. We must unify the scattered constituencies across this land who are convinced that child care is a vital necessity in this decade but who are fatally divided over the crossing of t's and dotting of i's and have not yet come together as a single voice of unity. We will extend our power to other groups, local and national, whose voices joined to ours will be heard where it counts. And together we will educate, we will persuade, will convince the American people that they have been blind to the neglect of their own most pressing human needs; that they are not seeing the daily waste of this nation's most precious human resource—its children.

We will leave it to others to write the bills, to lobby in the halls of Congress. As for us, we have a plan for the next four years. It will not be carried out in Washington; it will bring us to the people. Our task is to awaken, to unite, to mobilize.

What we have laid out is a broad general understanding of the situation to date. It is from this that we have set forth a new strategy and new tactics for the accomplishment of a comprehensive child care system in the next four years. Strategy and tactics concern themselves with how leadership uses the resources at its command. Leadership must make a proper assessment of what the tide will bear and formulate its blueprint for action. Therefore, I concern myself with the following questions:

1. *The ebb and flow of the period.*
2. *The development of new forces.*
3. *The timing period of direct action.*

Let us take for an example the importance of tides in navigation. Most captains, navigators and people who use the sea know the importance of the ebb and flow of the tides. Waste and debris ride out to sea and flow back with the tide—but their movement is based *solely* on the dictates of the tide. Navigators decide to use the tide. They plan and prepare their trips in relation to this ebb and flow to use its momentum to their advantage and for their purpose.

To translate this analogy to social phenomena, specifically to the day care movement, it is important to note that activities in child care are on the increase at the community level, and on the wane at the federal, in contrast to the preceeding period that saw day care activities at the federal level at a high peak. Take, for example, the number of bills: Brademas, Bayh, Reid, Chisholm,

Abzug, Mondale, Javits. Child care at the federal level was the most talked about piece of legislation since the social security amendment.

Yet its full significance at the community level was only understood by the most advanced social service forces, day care consumers, providers and the more advanced mayors and legislators. From force of habit the average worker continued to take for granted inadequate child care, latch key services, a grandmother, aunt or some relative of the family to provide some form of baby-keeping services for their children. Slogans such as "cognitive development," "*comprehensive* child care," the scientific analysis of growth and development during early years of life and all of the research that has been done on the significance of day care and child development have not reached the vast majority of the American people.

To put the question more simply, there are at the Washington level at this point in time a significant number of legislators prepared to introduce any bill that has any semblance of support. It is also a fact that there are a significant number of Washington-based organizations and a Washington coalition trained and skilled in the techniques of steering a comprehensive child care bill through the maze of legislative language and red tape. What is absent is the unified activity of the grassroots American people who set the tone for the passage of any form of legislation.

The Development of New Forces

It is important to take note of the forces now at play which have a direct interest in a system of comprehensive child development. The most active forces are to be found at the variety of conferences that are held in Washington, D.C., and the host of regional and state conferences that have become a method of work for the child care people. We have the social service workers of all descriptions, municipal, county and state Head Start directors associations, regional training offices and parent coordinators, Title IV-A center directors, coupled with some limited staff, national parent organizations and advisory groups, state and local parent organizations and individuals, many active Community Coordinated Child Care (4-C), women's organizations and just plain everyday ordinary citizens who have developed an interest in child care and child development. What is conspicuously absent from these existing forces are the industrial blue collar workers, the single parent workers, white collar and professional technical-industrial support, and the trade union movement. This reserve force of the day care movement should be considered as the new force for cultivation and organizing. The winning of this force to the side of a system of comprehensive child care is the major task confronting us at the moment.

Child care, day care, child development—which ever you prefer—must be taken out of the highly theoretical terminology of educational and social services professionals and reduced to workable and understandable language for our

people. It must be clearly understood that the problem is not so much of opposition to our plan as the force of habit among our people.

Let us take a couple examples of issues and the confusion at play in regard to these issues. Sexism in education very simply means that our educational system, including its early childhood programs, has reflected discrimination between male and female children and denied equal opportunities to females in the same way that we have introduced racism into education year after year. Both questions are significant and important to the future of America, and both must be dealt with in simple everyday concrete terms in order to be digested and made palatable to our people, to avoid the loss of significant support. Further, there is the sense that child care institutions undermine the stability of the family and that child care or child development is really only an adjunct to welfare. These and many more simple but extremely important issues must be worked on through the mass media, through conferences, through industrial periodicals, at union meetings by shop gate distribution, in order for child care and child development to become household words—understood in order to win to the side of the day care movement this most significant force—in order to win the battle.

The Period of Direct Action

It may suffice to borrow a page or two from the history of direct action in our nation to understand the principle on which it was based. The basic assumption is that the majority of American people believe in and want to participate in what is right and just and that direct action deals with dramatizing the incorrectness of a given issue. The assumption is made that when our people become aware of injustice they will lend their strength and assistance to the correction of the problem. This calls for faith and confidence in the people of our nation to rise to the challenge and to provide the strength and resources for the entering of a new stage.

The principle question in the civil rights period was that the American democracy provided for every single American living under our constitution to be accorded rights with every other American. Yet what prevailed was a system of Jim Crow, second class citizenship, the denial of the right to vote, and a system of dual accommodations in public utilities. That movement of direct action in hotels, swimming pools, buses, trains, airlines, etc. dramatized the issue to the world in general; but specifically the American people became aware, their consciousness was raised and therefore they were prepared to support legislative action to alleviate an un-American injustice.

The direct action of the child care movement will differ sharply *in tactics*, but the principle is one and the same. The plight of the nation's young, the lack of proper nutrition, the oppressive circumstances of parents, the depressive nature of the educational system, and the failure of local, state and federal government to provide a comprehensive system of child development—these facts point to

another form of dehumanizing injustice being perpetrated on the nation. It is the intention of the day care forces in this nation to dramatize this injustice by all of the avenues open to us. For in the final analysis, the *dehumanization* of our children and our youth lays the basis and sets the tone for the *dehumanization* of people in every institution in our democracy.

"The freedom to act in accordance with human values requires that the individual be able to perceive the insanity that masquerades as the normal human condition and rise above it. . .To do this, we must be willing to meet people where they are rather than where we would like them to be." (Jeremy Rifkin, *The Bicentennial Era*).

And the approach of America's 200th birthday seems an appropriate time to meet the people where they are—the more so since President Nixon himself has given us much of the language to do this. He has called in his inaugural address for Americans to help themselves. . .that they stop relying on the federal government to bail them out of their difficulties and move to act in their own behalves.

Let us take him up on that. Let us remind the people that America was not built by the government but by the people. And that the people instituted—indeed fought a revolution to obtain—that government. What were their reasons for fighting? We can find them in the Declaration of Independence, which lists the grievances of the American colonists against the English monarchy:

—"(The king) has refused his assent (i.e., vetoed) to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good."

—"He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance."

—"He has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power."

The Declaration says that the people have "inherent inalienable rights," among which are the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That we acquire these rights automatically, just because we are people; they are not given to us piecemeal by the government. The government is formed only to secure these rights and, the Founding Parents asserted, the entire population was qualified to make the decisions which most vitally affected their lives.

It is time to return to the "self-evident" truths on which this country, 200 years ago, was founded—founded by people dedicated enough to pledge their lives and fortunes to its success, by people many of whom lost their possessions and became hunted fugitives in the name of a democratic republic. Surely everyone can understand their fundamental language. Revolutionary they were, in those times that tried men's souls, but unAmerican?

In a positive spirit, then, let us begin to ask the people to ask themselves certain questions. What are our rights? Are we willing to surrender any of

them—or are we doing so? Is my government securing these rights for me? Where is *my* voice in the decisions which affect me and my children? Is the government abdicating its role in securing my rights when it tells me to look after myself—or is it actually extending to me new powers over my life and destiny? What powers? Are they being given or must I take them? Am I competent to do that?

It comes down, then, to the creation of a basic—and actually *new*—sense of identity and strength in the American mind and psyche. The government may very well not have foreseen the human potentials it will unleash by its "new federalism," for myriad controls are carefully built into that notion. But if we simply take the charge of the inaugural address and create on that basis an enlightened and concerned citizenry which sees as its function the active overseeing of the functions of its government(s), within the next four years every mother and father, every housewife, dentist and dockworker in America will be generating a force for human change such as this nation has not seen since 1776.

DAY CARE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

COUNCIL OF AMERICA, INC.

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The Council is a private, nonprofit membership organization. Our ultimate goal is the creation of a coordinated network of universally available, publicly financed, locally controlled quality child care programs with decisive parental involvement.